

U. S. Drug Reports Differ

By MICHAEL SATCHELL
Star-News Staff Writer

While secret intelligence reports over the past 18 months have presented a gloomy assessment of America's worldwide efforts to hamper international narcotics trafficking, the White House and the Justice Department have carefully fostered the opposite image — that the government was making significant gains in the fight against opium, heroin and cocaine smuggling.

In speeches and press releases, officials heralded Turkey's agreement to halt opium poppy production, the increased cooperation with foreign governments and record seizures of narcotics as hard evidence that the battle was well on its way to being won.

Dr. Jerome Jaffe, special consultant to the president on narcotics, and John E. Ingersoll, head of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, called them "major breakthroughs" and "milestones in the cooperative effort with foreign governments."

Thursday, the government released a report entitled "World Opium Survey, 1972" that reflected in part what intelligence networks had been saying for months.

But while the report acknowledged that things were not as rosy as pictured earlier, it still glossed over most of the facts and conclusions contained in Central Intelligence Agency and BNDD summaries that suggest the United States has only touched the tip of the world narcotics problem.

These summaries, stamped "Secret, No Foreign Dissemination," survey narcotics production and smuggling throughout Asia, Europe, Central and South America.

They detail widespread complicity by officials in several countries, suggest "extra-legal" actions the United States could consider, emphasize that the Turkish agreement will have little effect on the U.S. heroin problem, note that Vietnam war requirements have hampered the narcotics fight, and conclude that the massive effort by the United States and other nations has had little real permanent effect on the complex narcotics trade.

Among the major points in the summaries:

- Prohibiting the growth of opium poppies in Turkey is no guarantee against illegal cultivation, which has been around 100 tons a year.

- The Turkish agreement will have minimal impact on well established European smuggling pipelines that will easily switch from Turkey to Yugoslavia, Persia and Afghanistan for opium supplies.

- "Extra-legal" actions such as flooding markets with harmless or aggravating heroin substitutes to destroy the trade's credibility, destruction of narcotics factories by hiring criminal or non-official elements, pay-offs of corrupted officials as an income substitute, and defoliation, are highly problematical, but should not be rejected out of hand."

- The trade cannot flourish without corrupt civil servants and police in key positions. In the "Bulgarian Customs Game" for example, government officials sell to French traffickers opium that Bulgarian customs officials have confiscated from smugglers. The smugglers often pay small fines and can even buy back their own narcotics seized earlier.

- Despite increased narcotics seizures, no critical shortage has been observed on the illicit market.

- The probability of eliminating the trade in cocaine — currently the fastest growing hard narcotic used in the United States — is nil.

The CIA and BNDD intelligence summaries spell out in vivid detail the enormous problems facing the United States in trying to curtail the highly organized and immensely profitable international narcotics trade.

Illicit opium production, for example, is estimated at something between 1,200 and 1,400 tons each year. To produce enough heroin to satisfy American addicts and users, only 40 tons of opium are required.

Turkish opium was furnishing about 80 percent of the heroin destined for the United States with the remainder coming from a small amount from the Golden Triangle area of Laos-Thailand-Burma.

The CIA reports state that in Burma, the most important nation in the Golden Triangle and which produces about 460 tons of opium annually, the United States is virtually impotent in its enforcement opportunities.

"Opportunities to exert influence are extremely limited," the reports say. "Lack of U.S. leverage suggests the best hope lies with the United Nations. Burmese customs and military officials are reported in collusion with smugglers."

In neighboring Thailand, the reports state, "officials of the Royal Thai Army and Customs at the several checkpoints along the route to Bangkok are usually bribed and 'protection' fees prepaid by the smuggling syndicate or by the driver at the checkpoints."

In the Vientiane to Hong Kong pipeline, the CIA summaries report, "most of it is probably smuggled aboard military or commercial air flights including Royal Air Laos and Air Vietnam, often

by or in collusion with the crew."

In recent years, the Golden Triangle area has begun to produce finished heroin products for shipment rather than simply raw opium or morphine base from which the heroin is made.

"The technology of refining opium into heroin is no more complex than making bootleg whisky in the United States," a CIA report says, countering the popular image of complicated heroin "laboratories."

Pressure in Europe is creating shifts in smuggling patterns with West Germany emerging as a major narcotics storage and staging area with Munich, Frankfurt and Hamburg the principal centers.

The role of Bulgaria in recent years has "increased tremendously" and the Communist nation is used as safe haven from which major narcotics operations are directed.

"Sofia has been described as the new center for directing narcotics and arms trafficking between western Europe and the Near East," the reports state. "French and United Kingdom officials have also voiced their belief that Bulgarian government officials may be actively involved in selling seized Turkish narcotics to French traffickers."

As South America emerges as an important transshipment point for narcotics entering the United States, there are indications of increased production of opium poppies in some Latin countries including the Columbia-Ecuador border and Costa Rica.

Cuban exiles and Puerto Rican nationals are playing key roles in the trade and production is switching from marijuana to the more profitable cocaine and heroin.